



## A Brand New Name — Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup>

For many years, as a member of the Great-West Family of Companies<sup>SM</sup>, BenefitsCorp provided education and communication services to defined contribution plans, such as your employer's Plan. In addition to these services, other members of the Great-West family provide administration, recordkeeping and investment services.

For the first time, all the units that provide these services will operate under the same umbrella—**Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup> (GWRs)**.



### Only Change is the Name

Rest assured the only change is in the brand name. All of the current investment options, services and experienced personnel associated with your Plan will remain the same. Our slogan, The Power of Partnering<sup>SM</sup>, which highlights and emphasizes our business philosophy in working with you, also remains unchanged.

### Visit Your GWRs<sup>SM</sup> Representative

The Power of Partnering is about helping to build a better financial future together. You continue to have access to the same professionally licensed, Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup> account representatives, who know the details of your Plan.

### Check Out the Web Site

The Web site at [www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange](http://www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange) remains the place to find Plan account information and retirement planning tools. As always, visit the Web site to access these interactive planning tools and account details:

- **DreamTracker<sup>SM</sup>** Estimate your retirement savings nest egg and analyze whether you are on track to meet your retirement income needs.
- **Paycheck Comparison** View the effects of pre-tax retirement plan contributions on your take-home pay.
- **College Planner** Plan for your child's college tuition.
- **Loan Calculator** Analyze general loan payment scenarios.
- **Easy Account Access\*** Detailed Plan and account information and the flexibility to make changes is available online or through KeyTalk<sup>®</sup>, the automated telephone response system.

### Our Ongoing Commitment

Under our new brand, Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup>, we continue our ongoing commitment to help you understand and evaluate your retirement choices through your employer's Plan. If you have any questions, please contact your Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup> representative.

\*Transfer requests made by Web site or via KeyTalk<sup>®</sup> received prior to 1:00 p.m. Pacific Time on business days will be initiated at the close of the business day. The actual effective date of your transaction may vary depending on the investment options selected. Access to KeyTalk<sup>®</sup>, the automated response system, and the Web site may be limited or unavailable during periods of peak demand, market volatility, systems upgrades/maintenance or other reasons.

# Crystal Ball

You can't predict market performance — but you can make some educated guesses

Everyone knows that you can't predict the ups and downs of the market. There is, however, one tool of economic measurement that acts as a kind of "crystal ball." It can help you get a general feel for where our economy may be headed.

Our crystal ball is **The Index of Leading Economic Indicators**. The leading index is really 10 economic "benchmarks" rolled into one, including unemployment insurance claims, building permits, interest rates and stock prices. It was designed to measure where the overall U.S. economy is headed during the next three to six months. Although determining the index requires some major calculating power, following it doesn't. Basically, when the leading indicators are rising, that's a positive sign of economic growth. When the indicators slow down or start to fall, that's a signal that growth is slowing.

At the end of June of this year, the Index of Leading Economic Indicators rose 0.1%. It was the third straight month that the index had increased. Four of the 10 components of the index rose in June, including stock prices and building permits. However, with high unemployment and weakness in the manufacturing sector, it was still uncertain whether the U.S. was about to enter a period of steady growth. But most analysts were feeling optimistic about the chances for a market turnaround.

The important thing to remember is to stay active in managing your financial future. Make an effort to understand what's going on and what affect it may have on your Plan account balance. The fact that you're in the market for the long term should help you weather the many ups and downs you'll experience over the years.

You can learn more and find the latest leading indicator figures at: [www.tcb-indicators.org](http://www.tcb-indicators.org). The index also is published monthly in the business section of your local paper and in many leading financial publications, such as *The Wall Street Journal*.

## Have you designated a Beneficiary?

When was the last time you checked to make sure you have designated a beneficiary? It is extremely important you have a beneficiary on file with Great-West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup>. Even if you filled out beneficiary information when you first enrolled in the Program, it's a good idea to check and make sure the information is correct. You can log on to [www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange](http://www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange) to view and update your beneficiary information.

In the event of your death, your primary beneficiary or beneficiaries will receive your account balance in the Program. Your contingent beneficiary will receive the money if the primary beneficiary dies before you do. You'll want to make sure you review your beneficiary designation as your personal circumstances change (such as your marital status) over the years.

# Upcoming Seminars

Great West Retirement Services<sup>SM</sup> and your County of Orange Defined Contribution Program offer a variety of educational seminars on financial topics throughout the year. They are meant to provide you with a broad-based understanding of your plan and increase your knowledge of investment terms and concepts from the most basic to quite advanced. They also provide you with the necessary tools to manage your account in a manner which promotes long-term financial security. Each quarter will feature two different seminar topics — for a current schedule, log on to [www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange](http://www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange) and click on the seminar link. During November and December the following seminars will be offered:

## Investment Fundamentals

This seminar will provide basic information to help you start building an effective investment program. We'll discuss the many different investment vehicles, how they work, their advantages and disadvantages, and the risks involved. We'll cover what stocks and mutual funds are, how bonds work, and proven investment concepts and strategies that can help you get started on designing a sound investment strategy.

Date/Time	Location
Wed., Nov 5 12 - 1 pm	SSA 23340 Moulton Pkwy Building B, Room 218 Laguna Hills
Wed., Nov 6 12 - 1 pm	SSA 1928 So. Grand Building A, Room 110 Santa Ana
Wed., Nov 12 12 - 1pm	Theolacy Detention Center 501 City Drive So. Briefing Room, 2nd Floor Orange
Thurs., Nov 13 12 - 1 pm	County Executive Office Hall of Administration 10 Civic Center Plaza Room 214-216 Santa Ana
Tues, Nov 18 12 - 1 pm	Braden Court 1337 Braden Court Dr. Auditorium Orange
Tues, Nov 18 12 - 1 pm	County Executive Office Hall of Administration 10 Civic Center Plaza Room 214-216 Santa Ana

## Asset Allocation

Come meet a fund company representative and hear a brief presentation on value investing philosophy and management strategy behind it. The representative will provide an economic outlook and reserve time for questions and answers.

Date/Time	Location
Tues., Dec 2 12 - 1 pm	SSA 1928 So. Grand Building A, Room 110 Santa Ana
Fri., Dec 5 11:30 - 12:30 pm 12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lameraux Justice Center 341 The City Drive 5th Floor Conference Room Orange
Wed., Dec 10 12 - 1 pm	SSA 23340 Moulton Pkwy Building B, Room 218 Laguna Hills
Thur., Dec 11 12 - 1 pm	County Executive Office Hall of Administration 10 Civic Center Plaza Board Hearing Room Santa Ana
Tues., Dec 16 12 - 1 pm	SSA Eckhoff 744 North Eckhoff Annex Auditorium Orange
Wed., Dec 17 12 - 1 pm	County Executive Office Hall of Administration 10 Civic Center Plaza Board Hearing Room Santa Ana



# New Tax Cuts Mean Savings for Many

## Jobs Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act

In June, President Bush signed a federal income tax-cut package into law. The tax cuts affect almost everyone who pays federal income taxes. In fact, the Treasury Department estimates that 91 million taxpayers will receive an average 2003 tax cut of \$1,126. Here are some highlights of this broad-reaching new tax law.

### Tax rates cut

Many of us noticed an increase in our paychecks this summer due to reductions in the tax rate brackets. These reductions affect all taxpayers except those in the 10% and 15% brackets.

2002 Rates	2003 Rates	Single Filers	Joint Filers
27%	25%	Over \$28,400	Over \$56,800
30%	28%	Over \$68,800	Over \$114,650
35%	33%	Over \$143,500	Over \$174,700
38.6%	35%	Over \$311,950	Over \$311,950

The new rates were effective in July, but the reductions are retroactive to the beginning of this year. This means that most taxpayers will have had too much federal income tax withheld from their paychecks for the first half of the year.

Even though taxpayers in the 10% bracket didn't see a tax rate reduction, they did see an increase in the income threshold. For single filers, the income threshold rises from \$6,000 to \$7,000, and it increases from \$12,000 to \$14,000 for joint filers.

### Child credit increases

The tax credit for most parents with children under the age of 17 increased from \$600 to \$1,000 per child. This summer the IRS sent checks for the increased amount (\$400 per child claimed in 2002) to qualifying families.

### Marriage penalty relief

The new law relieves the "marriage penalty" by raising the standard deduction for married couples to \$9,500 (twice

that of single filers). Also the standard deduction for married taxpayers filing separately increased to \$4,750 (the same as that of single taxpayers). Also for married couples, the 15% tax bracket widened to include a higher income threshold.

### Cuts won't last

All of the changes included in the tax law will expire over the next few years, unless Congress votes to extend them. For example, the expanded 10% bracket, marriage penalty relief and the increased child credit will all expire at the end of 2004. The tax rate reductions will stop after 2010 and return to 2002 brackets.

### More information available

Only some of the more broad-reaching tax law changes have been discussed here. To find out more information, visit the IRS Web site at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov).

## Have Questions? Need Information?

Web site: [www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange](http://www.benefitscorp.com/countyoforange)

KeyTalk®: Toll-free (866) 457-2254

Access to KeyTalk® and the Web site may be limited or unavailable during periods of peak demand, market volatility, systems upgrades/maintenance, or other reasons.

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